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The Task Force on assessment and evaluation has been charged to recommend the most effective means for assessing and evaluating the short-term activities and the long-term achievements of Action for Boston Community Development. The general objectives of the Task Force are: the analysis of data relevant for evaluating day-by-day decision-making; assessment of program activities at intervals determined by administrative action; and evaluation of the Program at its termination or at a fixed time. Within these objectives, five possible areas of assessment and evaluation can be identified: citizen participation, the adequacy of information required for administrative operations, organizational effectiveness, the total program, and urban renewal.

The assessment program of ABCD can rely upon a rich reserve of research talent in both the universities and existing agencies. Access to these reserves depends upon the creation of an appropriate mechanism to coordinate the major research and evaluative resources. This coordination will necessarily be related to urban renewal needs, but will also perform an important community function by inter-relating the operations of research organizations which are currently isolated from each other.

Two major recommendations are reported by the Task Force. The first is that ABCD should establish an examining committee with the responsibility of securing independent, periodic evaluation of the progress toward its agreed-upon goals. Secondly, ABCD should establish a small research unit directly responsible to the administrator with a dual function: a) the maintenance of a sensitive intelligence center utilizing administrative decision-making, resources of professional observations, and formal research, b) the mobilization of community research resources to meet the needs of ABCD.

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Task Force Report on

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

by

Robert Morris, Ph.D.

ACTION

FOR

BOSTON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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June, 1961

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The Task Force on Assessment and Evaluation has been charged to recommend the most effective means for assessing and evaluating the short-term activities and the long-term achievements of Action for Boston Community Development. This requires the answers to three specific questions:

1. Which Program activities can be assessed?
2. What means would be most effective for the day-to-day assessment and evaluation of Program activities?
3. What professional skills will be needed for this day-to-day assessment?

I. The Nature and Limitations of the Task

Assessment and evaluation of a major operating program is fundamentally the intelligent use of data: (a) to accomplish operational goals, and (b) to test progress towards selected goals. The evaluation of organizational activity has much in common with the flow of information essential for the administration of that activity. Both evaluation and administration depend upon a full flow of data and skill in the assessment of this data. The two functions differ primarily in the uses to which the assessment is put. Administration needs data to make operational plans and day-by-day decisions. Evaluation requires data to measure the results of administrative decisions and actions. Evaluation is not necessarily superior to the actions and decisions being evaluated but rather assures a second or additional view of the same data dealt with by administrative action.

Evaluation of this character is confronted by a serious gap between desirable goals and available tools. Adequate evaluation ideally demands quick and ready access to all relevant data by administrative and research staff for the purposes of: establishing goals and plans, identifying obstacles, developing decisions to overcome these obstacles, and testing progress. But data is seldom

comprehensively or completely available. Much necessary data is not available under any circumstances. Some data can only be secured at so great a cost in time and funds that the collection is unfeasible. Finally, neither the methodologies nor techniques for evaluation itself are sufficiently developed. As a result, evaluation remains as much of an art as it is a science.

A. Objectives. Application of these considerations to Action for Boston Community Development must take into account the fact that the exact organizational structure of ABCD and the dimensions of the tasks confronting it are not yet settled. Nevertheless, the broad purposes of the project indicate that it will deal with many basic and perhaps conflicting community forces -- human, social, political, economic, and technological. The staff will undoubtedly be confronted with constantly changing demands and circumstances. It must be highly flexible in organization and in the disposition of its resources. In light of this, an assessment and evaluation program needs to be functionally concerned with these three objectives:

1. The analysis of data relevant for evaluating day-by-day decision-making. (Insofar as it is possible, the assessment and evaluation functions should be distinguished from the gathering of administrative data essential for the execution of the Program. Nevertheless, a certain amount of overlapping in the kinds of data required for evaluation and for decision-making must be recognized.)

2. Assessment of Program activities, at intervals to be determined by administrative action.

3. Evaluation of the Program at its termination or at a fixed time. (Such evaluation is concerned with measurements of the extent to which the Program has achieved its original goals after a satisfactory period of operations.)

Within these general objectives, five possible areas of assessment and evaluation can be identified:

1. Citizen Participation. The progress and extent of involvement:

   a. at the level of neighborhood association;

   b. at the level of communication between each neighborhood and the city-wide policy makers.

2. The adequacy of information required for administrative operations:

   a. Health and welfare requirements and the larger social needs of each urban renewal district;

   b. needs of special groups whose problems are accentuated by urban renewal. For example, the aged, minority families, transients, chronic-problem families;

   c. district needs as seen by professional observers and residents themselves.

3. Organizational Effectiveness:

   a. The relationship between numerous public and private organizations which are concerned with common plans;

   b. inter-professional association and communication.

4. The Total Program. A continuing reappraisal of the direction and flexibility of Action for Boston Community Development. An opportunity to provide responsible administrators with independent appraisal.

5. Urban Renewal. An evaluation of the comprehensive impact of Boston's urban renewal program is desirable but probably not feasible.

Before discussing specific recommendations, several practical considerations need to be outlined.

B. Requirements. In order to perform such broad functions, certain requirements must be recognized:

1. The creation of an organizational unit to perform these functions within ABCD.

2. Full and free access by this unit to all sources of data within the project and in the community.

3. The means, either in staff or funds, for the assembly of relevant data.

4. The evaluation of assembled data and the exercise of judgment regarding its significance.

5. Adequate opportunity for the assessment unit to convey its judgments to policy-making and decision-making authorities within the project.

It must be recognized that there are potential difficulties in the relationship between an effective assessment program and the administration of a major organization. These difficulties are defined by the usual relationships between staff and line responsibilities or between independent research and administrative research. Staff operations can lack effective understanding of operating realities. On the other hand, administrative or line evaluation is frequently blurred by commitment to established procedures. The Task Force is of the view that a clear line of demarkation must be maintained between staff and line responsibilities. The executive authority of the Program must be fully recognized by the assessment unit. Responsibility for overall operations cannot be divided. The assessment program must be accepted as an advisory and informational tool to be utilized by the Program but subject to the overall authority of the central executive.

An assessment program in urban renewal cannot be limited to the bare bones of organizational operations. It must fundamentally be concerned with the impact of urban renewal and community planning upon the individual; upon the relationship between economic, social and political decisions, and the individual citizen. Assessment, sensitized to the individual, must depend upon more than statistical calculations. It is essential that it have access to both formal and informal data; to quantitative figures and also the views, attitudes, and reactions of many individuals. This goes beyond attitude studies of large numbers

of individuals. It is desirable that the assessment staff be capable of supplementing its more formal data gathering by attention to the attitudes, opinions, and observations of ordinary citizens and operating staff at all levels. Therefore, provision should be made for a free flow of reactions from ABCD staff. In this fashion, the creative observations of individuals can be woven into the more gross data which can be reduced to tabular form.

ABCD will also require an independent evaluation of progress towards its agreed upon goals. Independent evaluation, supplementing the operating staff's view of its own actions, can do much to enrich executive judgement. Furthermore, independent evaluation, providing a general view of organization actions, can make a major contribution to the understanding of the processes of urban renewal, city planning, and community planning; the experiences of ABCD can provide valuable insights for future programs and project designs.

II. Assessment Resources Available in Boston

Since Action for Boston Community Development will be a new organization, with a recommended life of five years, the question necessarily arises about the extent to which both data and research personnel are available from established institutions.

A. The Universities of Boston. The Boston metropolitan area is one of the major concentrations of higher education in the world. While many of the academic resources are located outside of the municipal limits of Boston, their existence in the metropolitan area makes them a major potential resource. The Task Force limited itself to exploration with universities which offer substantial graduate programs in the social sciences. Attachment A lists the individuals associated with various universities who were interviewed by the Task Force,

either individually or in a group meeting. Examples of the established areas of interest for each university and individual members of its faculty are noted in the attachement.

From these interviews, it appears that faculty members of the several universities will have a wide-ranging interest in Action for Boston Community Development. The types and ranges of their interests are most varied. This is matched by the diversity in university resources and forms of organization. Some universities, as corporate entities, appear to be interested in Boston's urban renewal program and may be interested in developing some official relationship. Other universities are more decentralized; their relationship to this project will be primarily reflected in the interest of independent departments or individual faculty members.

The types of resources available from universities for the assessment of ABCD can be classified as follows:

1. Individual faculty members, specialists in certain subjects, (as noted in Attachment A), willing to undertake responsibilities to the ABCD as a part of their university responsibilities.

2. Individual faculty members, specialists in various subjects, available for employment as either research directors or consultants.

3. Departmental and faculty studies in subjects related to urban renewal already initiated by departments or individual faculty members. In every instance where these related studies are already underway, faculty members have indicated their readiness to associate themselves with ABCD.

4. Individual or group studies to be conducted by graduate students under the direction of faculty advisors. This includes doctoral level research and senior supervision of graduate students in the conduct of field studies.

5. Universities may, in selected instances, be prepared to join with ABCD in joint application for financing of specialized research projects of mutual value and interest.

No single mechanism seems feasible by which this rich reservoir of skill, knowledge, and talent can be tapped for the benefit of ABCD; it is also clear that there will be a multiple demand for the talents and services of many of the same individuals. But all evidence indicates that university resources can be a primary asset if ABCD is prepared to create its own mechanism to draw effectively upon these resources. (See Recommendations)

B. Agencies and Organizations as Resources. The Task Force has reviewed the research resources available in health and welfare agencies, civic, economic, and social organizations of Boston and Massachusetts. This review has been limited to organizations maintaining full time research programs. Attachment B lists the major organizational research facilities considered relevant to the concerns of ABCD. The list is not claimed to be comprehensive. Representatives of the organizations starred in Attachment B have shared in face-to-face discussions of assessment and evaluation, leading the Task Force to the following conclusion:

> Agencies and operating organizations will have a mixed interest in the objectives of ABCD. The nature of their organizational responsibilities and the limitations of their resources combine to sharply limit consideration of such groups as research resources for ABCD. However, their interest is substantial and they can be expected to be responsive to specific projects which do not conflict with their basic internal responsibilities. Selective cooperation can be expected, but cannot be planned for in advance.

The character of expected cooperation seems to fall into three main types:

1. In a few very limited cases, special research projects can be undertaken by some organizations on a contract basis.

2. Public organizations which regularly assemble statistical data will make this available. To a lesser extent, private economic organizations can also make such data available. Much data assembled by these organizations is unpublished and unreported. Access to it will undoubtedly depend upon the provision of sufficient manpower to extract the data useful for the purposes of ABCD. This can be provided only to a very limited extent by the resources of the organizations themselves.

3. In some instances, special studies conducted by these organizations can be broadened by the addition of selected questions relevant to the interests of both ABCD and that organization.

Representatives of agencies and organizations see great community value, and value to themselves, in the establishment of communication channels. At the present time, no mechanism exists in the metropolitan area to record the many activities performed by various organizations. An important civic function can be performed by ABCD if its assessment program could initiate communication among these organizations, at least on the subjects which are of concern to ABCD itself. These communication activities might take the following forms:

1. An inventory of local materials assembled by various organizations with indication of its availability or accessibility.

2. A regular clearing-house of both public and private studies undertaken within selected subject areas.

3. Arrangement for an occasional exchange of practices and experiences across special interest lines. Thus, health, welfare, economic, and civic organizations frequently are conducting specialized studies of their own, which touch on the interests of all the others. Communication about these abutting subjects would be advantageous to all concerned. As a minimum, this would call for an individual or small staff with the primary responsibility to maintain personal contact with research activities of the various organizations, and to acquire knowledge about the relationship between these research activities and the requirements in funds or personnel to make these data readily available.

C. Conclusion Regarding Resources. The assessment program of Action for Boston Community Development can rely upon a rich reserve of research talent in both the universities and existing agencies. However, access to these reserves depends upon ABCD creating an appropriate mechanism to coordinate these major research and evaluative resources. This coordination will necessarily be related to urban renewal needs, but will incidentally perform a very important community function by coordinating and inter-relating the operations of major research organizations which are currently isolated from each other.

In order to effect this coordination, a very small but highly skilled staff is essential. It must be capable of maintaining appropriate professional associations with very distinguished research personnel, especially in the universities. It must also be able to assess the relevance of the research activities of various organizations to the requirements of ABCD. This staff must have the means for inducing these community resources to apply themselves to the requirements of ABCD. These inducements would include: the logic of common interests, funds for the contracting of special research, the provision of personnel for the extraction of data applicable to ABCD's needs, and staff capable of applying this assembled data to ABCD's program in cooperation with the primary resource.

In effect, the existing resources are concerned with their specialized interests at the present time. However, they recognize a potential identity of interests with ABCD. They require only a community objective towards which their specialized talents can be directed, and certain minimum coordinating means by which to relate their specializations to the community projects.

The community mechanism to serve these purposes may be a small ABCD intelligence center to link information and resources to application towards a major civic goal, that of urban renewal.

III. Recommendations

A. ABCD should establish an examining committee, with the responsibility of securing independent, periodic evaluation of ABCD's progress towards its agreed upon goals. The examining committee might call upon the ABCD research unit to perform this function. But the committee should be free to make alternative arrangements for the performances of this function through resources outside the ABCD organization.

B. ABCD should establish a small research unit directly responsible to the administrator.

1. The research unit's functions should include:

   a. The maintenance of a sensitive intelligence center between administrative decision-making, all of the resources of professional and staff observations, and formal research.

   b. The mobilization of community research resources to meet the needs of ABCD.

2. The research unit should be staffed by a research director with wide experience in the field of social and operational research. The director should be of sufficient professional stature to assure the respect of all of the university and organizational research leadership in the Boston metropolitan area. In addition, the research director should have available a minimum of two sides for the purposes outlined below.

3. The research unit should have a budget for the purchase or contracting of special studies, the costs of which can be shared by universities.

4. The ABCD should appoint an inter-university advisory council on research and assessment. This advisory council should serve both the Board of ABCD, and more directly, its research director. (Further consideration should be given to the constitution of the inter-university council as a "regional consultation committee" in the event the political separations and sub-divisions of the metropolitan area impede the attention of non-Boston universities to the urban renewal program of Boston proper.)

5. The staff of the research unit should be assured full access to all operating programs of the ABCD. In turn, all operating staff, whether directly employed or indirectly contracted for, should be assured of full access to the research staff for the reports on informal as well as formal statistical data. The informal communications should include personal observations about progress and obstacles, as well as quantifiable data.

6. Specific tasks of the research unit:

   a. To serve as an intelligence center for the administration of the ABCD.

   b. Serve as a community clearing center on research by universities and other organizations related to the social aspects of urban renewal. The clearing center may include:

      (1) The development and maintenance of contact with relevant university personnel.

      (2) Inventories of ongoing research.

      (3) Other clearing-house activity.

   c. Arrangements for the conduct of special studies as required by ABCD, using all available resources.

   d. Arrangements for the conduct of special evaluative studies on the progress of the ABCD.

   e. The administration of specially earmarked funds for the purpose of contract research to carry out the objectives of c. and d., above.

   f. The administration of contracted-for research including: the selection of resources, the specifying of contract provisions, and compliance.

   g. The development, in cooperation with university resources, of joint research projects for special purposes of interest to both university and ABCD. The development of such joint research projects will be jointly submitted to independent sources of financing outside of the available ABCD budget.

   h. Determination as to which administrative statistics are useful for evaluation. The unit should advise the administrator on methods of gathering data.

ATTACHMENT A

1. Individuals associated with universities, who were interviewed by the Task Force either individually or in a group meeting:

DiMatteo, Anthony, (for Robert O'Hare) Boston College Seminar Research Bureau

Driscoll, Father John V., S.J., Dean School of Social Work, Boston College

Inkeles, Alex, Professor of Sociology, Harvard University

Kelso, James, Assistant to the President, Massachusetts Institute of Technolog

Meyerson, Martin, Director of the Joint Center for Urban Studies of MIT and Harvard University

Morris, Robert, Chief Consultant for Task Force on Assessment and Evaluation, Brandeis University

Poole, Ithiel DeSola, Professor of Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Rubin, Mortin, Professor of Sociology, Northeastern University

Simha, C. Robert, Planning Office, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Sweetser, Frank L., Professor of Sociology, Boston University

Whitlock, Charles P., Assistant to the President, Harvard University

2. Some areas of interest to universities and individual faculty members, related to the concerns of ABCD.

Boston College:

School of Social Work -- developing a training program in community organization;

Seminar Research Bureau -- conducting a survey on business relocation in urban renewal programs.

Boston University:

Department of Sociology is attempting to develop a program for preparing community profiles.

Brandeis University:

Florence Heller Graduate School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare -- conducting research on the impact of the denial of public assistance.

Harvard University:

Joint Center for Urban Studies -- research projects on Boston.

Department of Social Relations -- community studies.

School of Business -- doctoral dissertations on the economic problems of Boston.

M.I.T.:

Engineers studying the social consequences of physical changes.

Graduate students studying the political aspects of planning.

Undergraduate exchange program with Dartmouth College -- students explore the problems of the South End under the joint supervision of M.I.T.'s Department of Political Science and United South End settlements.

Study of the effects of educational television.

Tufts:

Study of children's behavior in wathcing television.

ATTACHMENT B

List of Major Organizational Research Facilities Considered Relevant to the Concerns of ABCD

AFL-CIO

*Boston College Seminar Research Bureau

Boston Department of Public Welfare

Boston Housing Authority

*Boston Municipal Research Bureau

Boston Real Estate Board

*Boston Redevelopment Authority

The Boston Youth Activities Bureau

The Children's Service Association

*Federal Reserve Bank of Boston

Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce

Greater Boston Economic Study Committee

Jewish Community Council

*Joint Center for Urban Studies of MIT and Harvard University

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination

Massachusetts Council of Churches

*Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare

Massachusetts Department of Public Works

Massachusetts Youth Service Board

Metropolitan Mortgage Bureau

*Retail Trade Board

United Community Services

*Urban League of Greater Boston, Inc.

*Representatives of these organizations have met directly with the Task Force Consultant